

LRC

LIABILITY REFORM COALITION

The Liability Reform Coalition (LRC), a broad coalition of businesses, local governments, health care professionals, non-profits and others committed to reasonable tort reform, recently commissioned a study of Washington voters by two independent research firms. The findings were significant.

Voters will support candidates who support tort reform.

- Nearly two-thirds of voters surveyed – 66% -- said they would be more likely to SUPPORT a candidate who supports limits on non-economic damages in personal injury cases.
- Fully 79% of voters surveyed would be more likely to vote AGAINST a candidate who receives support or money from a personal injury lawyer.

Voters think liability reform is important and want legislators to fix the problem.

- Fully 56% of voters surveyed describe the issue of medical malpractice lawsuits in Washington today as a crisis or major problem.
- The concept of limiting non-economic damages is widely popular – 72% support limits on the amount of money juries can award for non-economic damages.
- Fully three quarters (75%) of voters feel that juries have gone wild, awarding huge amounts and feel we need limits to restrict those excessive payments.
- After hearing the difference between economic and non-economic damages, a majority of Republicans (78%), Independents (55%) and Democrats (52%) said they would SUPPORT legislation that limited the amount of non-economic damages juries can award in medical malpractice and personal injury lawsuits to \$250,000.

Voters are concerned about the economy.

- 59% of voters feel that the rising number of personal injury lawsuits being filed is hurting the economy, and making Washington a less attractive place to do business.

Voters are concerned about access to their doctors and the cost of their healthcare.

- 78% of voters feel that without limits on non-economic damages, the price of health care will increase significantly.
- A majority of voters (65%) feel that without limits on non-economic damages, like pain and suffering, the number of doctors in rural areas will decline dramatically.
- 67% of voters agree that many pregnant women in Washington will be unable to get proper medical and childbirth care because doctors are closing their practices as a result of high premiums of medical malpractice insurance.

Fundamental fairness is important to Washington voters.

- A vast majority of voters (86%) agreed that when damages are awarded against several defendants, each should only have to pay the percentage the court found them responsible for.
- 74% of voters feel it is not fair for taxpayers to foot the bill for large damage awards in personal injury lawsuits against state and local governments.
- 68% of voters believe that medical malpractice is more about money for personal injury lawyers than about justice for patients.

There is a general feeling of dissatisfaction among Washington voters.

- The majority of voters (59%) in each region of the state and across the political spectrum feel things in Washington state are heading in the wrong direction. Only 29% feel the state is heading in the right direction.

About the Study

Evans/McDonough and Moore Information conducted the survey. Telephone interviews of 600 voters in Washington state were conducted from October 24 through October 26, 2003. The overall margin of error was ± 4.0 percentage points.